

Rhetorical Aspects of Repetition in the Qur'an According to the Risale-i Nur

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Introductions

First Introduction: The Dictionary and Technical Meanings of the Word 'Repetition'

Originally, the letters kaf and ra in Arabic indicated meanings of 'gathering together' and 'repetition.' Thus, karartu means 'I redid something that had already been done.' It means 'to do something repeatedly.'¹

The verbal noun al-karr, which is conjugated karra 'alayh, yakirru, karran, has the meaning of 'a rope by which to climb a date-palm.' The plural of the verbal noun, kurur, also means 'sail ropes.'²

al-Karr also means 'retreat'. Karrara al-shay'a and karra karrahu mean 'he did something over and over again.' al-Karra means 'one time,' the plural of which is karrat. And karrartu 'alayhi al-haditha wa karkartuhu means 'I repeatedly described the incident to him.'

al-Jawhari says it is used in the form: karrartu al-shay'a takriran wa takraran. While Sa'id Abu Darir said: Abu 'Amr was asked the difference between the forms, taf'al and tif'al. He replied that taf'al was a noun form, while tif'al was a verbal noun.³

In his Mufradat, al-Raghib al-Isfahani says this: al-karr has the meaning of 'folded up' and a folded rope is called karr. This usage was originally a verbal noun, but it later became a noun, with its plural as kurur. al-Raghib gives these verses:

Then did We grant you the return against them.(17:6) * Now if we only had a chance of return, we shall truly be of those who believe.(26:102) * And those who followed would say: "If only we had one more chance, we would clear ourselves of them...(2:167) * If only I had another chance, I should certainly be among those who do good.(39:58)⁴

This verb is used in various places in the Qur'an: They say: "It would in that case, be a return with loss!"(79:12) * Again turn your vision a second time; [your] vision will come to you dull and discomfited, in a state worn out.(67:4)

On studying the dictionary meanings, we see that the verb karra revolves around meanings of 'to gather together,' 'to repeat,' 'to redo something,' 'to wind something around something else.' The same is true for speech, for words are repeated, and like trying to reach the top of a date-palm by means of a rope, are brought together and reiterated in order to reinforce the meaning.

Second Introduction: Repetition and Eloquence

Scholars of rhetoric and the forms of speech have not dealt with the question of repetition in detail despite its importance and being one of the most popular styles of speech in pre-Islamic Arabia. They have noted its importance and discussed its various sorts in a certain amount of detail, but because it is a very clear style, they have not dealt with it in as much detail as one would have wished, and have spoken in generalities. For instance, in his work al-'Umda Ibn Rashid gives the following brief explanation:

"There are places where repetition is appropriate, and places where it is not. It is used more often for words rather than for meanings; there are fewer places where there are repetitions of meanings. It is unsatisfactory where the words and meaning are repeated together."⁵

Ibn Rashiq gives examples from the Qur'an and from Arab poetry. His examples of repetition of meanings, he takes from Imr' al-Qays,⁶ and examples of repetition of couplets from Abu Kabir al-Hudhali,⁷ and examples considered to be defective and faulty from Abu Tammam.⁸ Ibn Rashiq does not mention the sort of repetition called al-madhhab al-kalami,⁹ which Ibn Mu'taz notes in his work al-Badi' and attributes to Abu 'Uthman al-Jahiz, saying that it is expressive of artificiality. We do not therefore encounter it in the Qur'an.

Third Introduction: Repetition in Poetry

Repetition is a style much used in Arab poetry ever since the pre-Islamic period. It is therefore well-known, and has various usages and purposes. The contemporary scholar 'Abdullah al-Tayyib has studied repetition in Arab poetry in more depth than anyone, and links it on the one hand to rhythm, and on the other to the meaning. He describes it as follows:

"Since the harmony of a piece is realized through variety and repetition, the external forms of repetition are not more than pure repetition and word-play (jinas). Similarly, the variety of the style is nothing more than the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas (tibaq) and division (taqsim). The music of the verses springs from these four elements, as well as from the rhyme and metre."¹⁰

About repetition of the meaning, Ibn Rashiq says this: "The main aim of repetition is to address; and by address we mean the poet's strengthening his composition by way of repetition."¹¹

According to Ibn Rashiq, "One may classify as follows the sorts of repetitions poets use in their poetry:

1. Repetition for the purpose of reinforcing the musical quality.
2. Repetition for the purpose of emphasizing the apparent meanings.
3. Repetition for the purpose of emphasizing the particular meanings."¹²

One of the famous sorts of repetitions of the pre-Islamic period was repetition of a phrase which was expanded to complete the hemistich. A fine example of this is the following by al-Harith ibn Haliza in a number of verses of his qasida:

Qarriba marbitu'l-na'amati minni

al-Muhalhal replied like this:

Qarriba marbitu'l-mashhari minni

al-Muhalhal frequently employed this style. We may mention here his hemistich:

Ya bujayra'l-khayrati la sulha hatta,

and his famous,

'Ala an laysa 'adlan min kulaybin.

Dr. 'Abdullah al-Tayyib studied this in the light of 'melodic' repetitions, and in the light of contemporary poetry placed it in the category of repetitions of one or two verses, made in order to separate the sections of a qasida:

"As far as may be understood, Arabic was first acquainted with repetitions of this sort in the early period. There are two points suggesting that this was the case: the first is the style similar to this in some of the Meccan suras, such as the verse So which of the favours of your Sustainer will you deny? in Sura al-Rahman, and the verse, And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition? in Sura al-Qamar. I am not of the opinion that the Qur'an surprised the Arabs with a new style. For it both used this style in these two suras in accordance with particular rules, and it used similar repetitions in other suras. ... Secondly, we may see traces of this style in poems that are part of the legacy of the pre-Islamic period, and in certain poems of the Islamic period, and even pre-dating it."¹³

In the present day, repetition as a style has taken on new dimensions. This attracted the attention of Nazik al-Mala'ika, who analyzed it in his work Qadaya al-Shi'r al-Mu'asir. He said: "The extensive use of repetitions to be seen in modern poetry is not something that was discussed in the classic books of rhetoric, which we use our study of language and style."¹⁴ This is true generally speaking, for being a literary style, repetition is allotted little space in the books on rhetoric, compared with the styles and forms of expression of the sciences of Bayan and Badi'. Nazik al-Mala'ika gives the following sorts of repetition:

1. Repetition of a single word at the start of a verse.
2. Repetition of a phrase.
3. Repetition of a whole verse.
4. Repetition of a section.
5. Repetition of a letter.

He also discusses repetitions of meanings of various sorts.¹⁵

Fourth Introduction: Repetition According to the Scholars of the Qur'an's Miraculousness

As a rhetorical style which takes a number of forms in the Qur'an, the scholars of the Qur'an's miraculousness -and particularly of Bayan- have analyzed the repetitions in detail, and have achieved greater success than everyone. However, those who glance at the books about the Qur'an's miraculousness do not encounter knowledge to gladden their hearts. Some have touched on it briefly, others have not mentioned it at all. Those who have given it special attention can be counted on the fingers of one hand. If we take as an example al-Baqillani's *I'jaz al-Qur'an*, we see that he dealt with it very swiftly. And this was because of his great concern with the miraculousness of the Qur'an's eloquence. He says: "According to the scholars of rhetoric, repetition is one of the Badi' styles as the poet said:

Halla sa'alta jumu'a kindata yawma walaw ayna ayna?

Another poet says:

Wa kanat fizaratu tasla bi-na

Fa-awla fizarat awla fizara

We find a similar usage in the Qur'an. Almighty God says:

Fa-inna ma' al-'usri yusra, inna ma' al-'usri yusra.(94:5, 6)

There are similar repetitions in the sura Qul ya ayyuha'l-kafirun.(109:1)

There is a further meaning in this usage, for it is foretelling events that are to happen in the future."¹⁶

As is seen, there are subtle indications in this usage, but because the question is dealt with in summary fashion, the reader feels the need for further explanation.

Bediuzzaman and the Rhetorical Aspects of Repetition in the Qur'an

The Eloquence of the Repetitions is Miraculous

If one studies what Bediuzzaman Said Nursi wrote about repetition in the Qur'an and compares it with the ideas of the scholars of miraculousness, we may conclude that Bediuzzaman's views are distinctive in several ways:

Firstly: His realization that repetition in the Qur'an is an aspect of its miraculousness.

Secondly: The unprecedented way in which he explained the repetitions.

Thirdly: He observed the eloquence of the repetitions, defined their sorts, examined the reasons for them, mentioned their different forms, and deduced their purposes.

Fourthly: Bediuzzaman stated that the repetitions in the Qur'an were only apparently repetitions.

As far as I know, these are matters that have not been discussed by previous scholars.

Bediuzzaman noted forty of the unlimited aspects of the Qur'an's miraculousness, which was the greatest miracle of God's Messenger (PBUH), the source of all miracles, and said that repetition was one of these aspects. He said:

"By making known that it is also a book of prayer and summons, of invocation and Divine unity, which require repetition, it demonstrates a sort of miraculousness through making understood in a single sentence and a single story through its agreeable repetitions numerous different meanings to numerous different classes of people."¹⁷

Again, Bediuzzaman emphasizes:

"... to repeat such verses is not a fault, but most powerful miraculousness, and most elevated eloquence; an eloquence and lucid style corresponding exactly to the requirements of the subject."¹⁸

So how is this miraculousness manifested?

Sorts of Repetition

There are two sorts of repetition in the Qur'an:

1. Repetition of sentences.

2. Repetition of stories.

First Sort: This is the sort Ibn Rashiq described as occurring "mostly in the words, rather than in the meaning."¹⁹ "The verse, So which of the favours of your Sustainers will you deny? in Sura al-Rahman is a miraculous repetition of this sort, which Almighty God repeated on recalling the bounties He bestows on jinn and men."²⁰

This repetition of the words, or as Bediuzzaman calls it, "sentence repetition," is closely related to the meaning, for "this Address displays such an elevated miraculousness and comprehensiveness..."²¹

Thus, the repetition renews the address, as it were, with the change and renewal of the generations and centuries. For it does not address only the people of the Prophet's (PBUH) time: "It is as though, addressing every age and every class of people, not as one share of the story or one lesson from an historical story, but as parts of a universal principle, it is newly revealed."²²

Also of this sort are the words and phrases at the ends of verses:

"Particularly its often repeated threats of the wrongdoers, the wrongdoers, and its severe expositions of calamities visited on the heavens and the earth, in punishment for their wrongdoing -through these and the retribution visited on the 'Ad and Thamud peoples and on Pharaoh- it draws attention to the unequalled wrongs of this century, and through the salvation of prophets like Abraham (PUH) and Moses (PUH) gives consolation to the oppressed believers."²³

Here, the repetition is performing a double function: on the one hand the repeated phrase (word) the wrongdoers... the wrongdoers as though rains down blows on the unbelievers, and on the other, in meaning it consoles the believers.

This miraculous style of repetition is one that non-Muslims and non-Arabs in particular cannot appreciate. In his work, *Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, Thomas Carlyle assigns a splendid section to God's Messenger (PBUH), entitled: "The Hero as Prophet: Mahomet: Islam." He ascribes to the Prophet all the virtues he sees fit and refutes many falsehoods fabricated by the West. In connection with the Qur'an, he feels the need to differentiate between its effects on the Arabs and on Westerners:

"... Mahomet dictated at intervals his Sacred Book, which they call the Koran, or Reading, 'Thing to be read.' This is the Work he and his disciples made so much of, asking all the world, Is not that a miracle? The Mahometans regard their Koran with a reverence which few Christians pay even to their Bible. Very curious if one sought for 'discrepancies of national taste,' here surely were the most eminent instance of that! We also read the Koran ... I must say, it is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook. Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran. We read in it, æ we might in the State-Paper Office, unreadable masses of lumber, that perhaps we may get some glimpses of a remarkable man. It is true we have it under disadvantages: the Arabs see more method in it than we. ... This may be a great point; much perhaps has been lost in the translation here. ... So much for national discrepancies, and the standard of taste."²⁴

Thus, Carlyle says that for Europeans the repetition in the Qur'an is wearisome, "endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement..." However, he admits that this may arise from its virtues being lost in translation. We may understand from this therefore, that translations of the Qur'an are not the Qur'an, and that the Qur'an's eloquence and rhetorical miraculousness, one aspect of which is repetition, may be comprehended only by those with extensive knowledge of Arabic.

There are two matters that Carlyle mentioned and that Bediuzzaman expounds at length: **The first** is related to boredom arising from repetition. This is true; frequent repetition of something

does give rise to boredom and weariness. But God's Word is not like this, for it is "the Book that does not age with repetition," as it says in the Hadith. In fact, the more it is repeated, the more it is renewed and refreshed, and the more its beauty and greatness increase. And the repetition becomes one aspect of its miraculousness. Bediuzzaman says about this:

"The Qur'an has demonstrated such a veracious sweetness that whereas the repetition of even the sweetest thing induces disgust, it has from earliest times been accepted by everyone and even become proverbial that repeated recitation of the Qur'an, far from inducing disgust and weariness in men of sound heart and pure taste, on the contrary increases its sweetness."²⁵

We see in the above Bediuzzaman's fine style, in which he sets out a profound meaning in concrete terms. To emphasize his idea he gives familiar examples, in this way bringing together the abstract or spiritual (ma'nawi) and concrete or sensory (hissi). For he is indicating while describing the intellectual pleasure of the Qur'anic repetitions, that even the most pleasurable things cause boredom when frequently repeated. The things he calls the most pleasurable, he examines within the concept of concrete (hissi) things. What immediately springs to mind are the manna and quails that Almighty God sent as food for the Children of Israel, but which because of their unbelief, they started to weary of, saying to Moses (PUH): "O Moses! We cannot endure one kind of food [always]."²⁶

The second matter is the impossibility of the Qur'an's translation. Bediuzzaman discussed this at some length in many places in the Risale-i Nur. He suggested that the intention of some of those who were seeking the Qur'an's translation was to exhibit its unnecessary repetitions.²⁷ He refuted them decisively, saying:

"A true translation of the Qur'an is not possible, and other languages cannot preserve the Qur'an's qualities and fine points in place of the grammatical language of Arabic. Man's trite and partial translations cannot be substituted for the miraculous and comprehensive words of the Qur'an, every letter of which yields from ten to a thousand merits; they may not be read in its place in mosques."²⁸

As is known, speech is constituted of words and meaning, and what we call translation is the conveyance of the meaning; the words and what the words indicate cannot be translated. al-Jahiz said that poetry cannot be translated, for "Even if in translating poetry (Arab wisdom) into other speech all its meanings are conveyed, it will still lack the metre, which represents its inimitable (mu'jiz) aspect."²⁹ The same is true for books on geometry, mathematics, astrology, and linguistics, "so how should it not be thus for the Books which inform us about religion, which teaches us what God Almighty permits and what He does not permit?"³⁰

Repeated Recitation

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi brings up a subject that has not been discussed by other authors, which is that translations of the Qur'an are not restricted to the words and meaning alone, but affect a third and subtle matter. This is related to the question of repetitions, but is a repetition of a different sort: repeated recitation. This is the repetition that causes an outpouring of conscious belief, which no translation can effect. For it is God's Word that is being recited, leading to the emanation of effulgences and blessings. Could these emanate even to the slightest degree, from recitation in anything other than "the clear Arabic" in which the Qur'an was revealed? Recitation of the original surpasses the words, which are the form of the meaning, and it surpasses the meaning, till it permeates the depths of the spirit. And this is all reinforced by repetition. Ustad Bediuzzaman relates some of his own experiences:

"On the Day of 'Arafa, the eve of the Festival of Sacrifices, I used to recite Sura al-Ikhlās hundreds of times. I would observe that some of my non-physical senses would receive the sustenance several times, then would cease to do so, and stop. Others like the faculty of reflective thought would turn towards the meaning for a time, receive their share, then they too would stop. And some like the heart would receive their share in respect of certain

concepts which were the means to a spiritual pleasure, then they too would fall silent. And so on. Gradually, with repetition only some of the subtle faculties would remain and become wearied only long after the others; they would continue, leaving no need for further meaning and study. Heedlessness was not detrimental to these, as it was to the faculty of thought. Enough for them were the usual meaning contained in the marks and signs, with the summary of the meaning which the words and the words full of meaning comprised. If the meaning had been thought of at that point, it would have caused harmful boredom. Anyway, those subtle faculties which continue are not in need of study and comprehension, they rather show need for recollection, regard, and encouragement. And the words which are like skin are sufficient for them and perform the duty of meaning. Especially with recalling through those Arabic words that they are the Word of God and Divine speech, they are means of constant effulgence.

"Thus, this state which I myself experienced shows that it is extremely harmful to express in another language truths like the call to prayer and the tesbihat following the obligatory prayers, and suras of the Qur'an like Fatiha and Ikhlas, which are repeated all the time. For when the constant spring of the Divine words and words of the Prophet are lost, the constant share of those constant subtle faculties is also lost. Also harmful are the loss of the minimum of ten merits for each word, and the heedlessness and the darkness caused to the spirit by the human terms of the translations due to the constant sense of the Divine presence not persisting for everyone throughout the prayers."³¹

I want to say that I felt it necessary to quote the whole passage above despite its length. It explains the virtues of repeated recitation of the Qur'an and describes the Divine effulgences it gives rise to in man's inner world. Similarly, it defines the levels of perception from man's feelings to his intellect, and from there to his heart, and from there to his subtle inner faculties, which are beyond all these. When the realm of feelings reaches the stage of perception, it halts, and the intellect receives its share from the meaning. Then when the intellect starts to feel bored, the heart takes its share from the repetition and feels tranquil, and the subtle inner faculties retain their vitality and life; the repetition merely increases their luminosity. But all these occur only through the recitation of God's Word as it was revealed to His Messenger (PBUH). It is because of this that "what they call translations are abbreviated and deficient approximations."³²

The Second Sort of Repetitions: The Repetition of Stories³³

The Qur'an's stories are a rhetorical style used in calling to religion. We do relate to you the most beautiful of stories, in that We reveal to you this [portion of the] Qur'an; before this, you too were among those who knew it not.³⁴ Since they are central to this call, the most frequently mentioned stories in the Qur'an are those of the prophets. The stories about Moses (PUH), which relate the obduracy of the Children of Israel, and their unbelief and ingratitude, are probably the most frequently repeated stories. They are sometimes given in summary and sometimes in detail. The stories about Moses are given in some detail in Suras Ta. Ha, al-Baqara, al-A'raf, and al-Shu'ara. The person who studies these in depth will conclude, as Bediuzzaman did, that they are "only apparently repeated." For each of these suras presents different aspects of the story, depicting hitherto unmentioned scenes. Each repeat emphasizes a different side of the story. Sometimes the birth of Moses is focussed on in the story, and his upbringing, and his appointment to prophethood. In another, it is the obduracy of the unbelievers that is emphasized, and the fates they suffered. Then in yet another, in Sura al-Mu'min, the very different scene of a member of Pharaoh's household is depicted. Then in Sura Ta. Ha. the story is told of Samiri and the calf of the Children of Israel. Thus, different points are emphasized on every occasion.

Each place the story is repeated a new meaning emerges, a different exemplary scene is given, a different meaning is emphasized. As we said above, the story of Moses (PUH) is repeated in many different suras, but in one sura the chief aim is to clarify understanding of Divine unity and to strengthen the belief, while in another it is proof Divine power that is intended. Sometimes, the story illustrates the struggle between truth and falsehood, and describes the recompense awarded to the believers, and the consequences meted out to the

unbelievers. Then in other places, it describes the grace Almighty God bestows on the pious, and the unity of religions and the multiplicity of the Divine messages. Then in another story, we are told that there is a single method of calling to God.

The Mysteries of Repetition

A person may ask himself concerning the mystery of the repetitions in the Qur'an and why they do not cause boredom like human styles and repetitions. We conclude on studying the Risale-i Nur attentively that there are various mysteries, reasons, and motives behind the Qur'anic repetitions, which we may summarize as follows:

When a literary piece is treated in accordance with modern literary theory, the elements of the piece, that is, the speech, the speaker, and the addressee, are not treated separately; that is, the speech or piece is studied in the context of the addressee and the process of his perception of the piece. We see that when analyzing the rhetorical aspects of repetition, Said Nursi attached great importance to the elements we mentioned, ascribing the miraculousness of the repetitions to this matter.

1. The Source of the Address/Piece: The source of the speech, that is, the speaker, has a strong influence on the nature of the address. Firstly, then, the speech receives its power from the one who speaks it. When this is Almighty God the power and effectiveness of the speech are therefore infinite. Thus, when the repetitions come from this source, Almighty God, their effectiveness will be incomparably greater than if they had come from some other source. Bediuzzaman laid great emphasis on this matter, particularly in his discussions of the form of the Qur'anic address, and he gave detailed explanations: "Speech is of different categories, and in regard to superiority, power, beauty and fineness, has four sources: one is the speaker, another is the person addressed, another is the purpose, and another is the 'station' (maqam). Its source is not only the 'station' as literary people have wrongly shown. So in speech one should consider, 'Who said it? To whom did they say it? Why did they say it? In what position did they say it?'"³⁵ For this reason, Bediuzzaman concludes: "The Qur'an cannot be compared with other words and speech,"³⁶ because it is "the true effective command comprising power and will."³⁷

2. The Nature of the Address: The second matter related to the speech's source is the nature of the address or speech. If the source of the speech is God Almighty, the nature of the address must also be Divine. The speech therefore has great variety, as well as being comprehensive. The repetitions are a natural result of this variety and comprehensiveness, for the Qur'an "is also a book of prayer and summons, of invocation and Divine unity, all of which require repetition..."³⁸

3. Renewal of the Speech: The unbelievers, who denied the resurrection of the dead, confronted God's Messenger (PBUH) with various forms of denial: sometimes they repeatedly asked the same questions or similar questions, and he had to respond to specious arguments of this kind and reply to the questions which in form were repeated but in content were different. The doubts these obdurate unbelievers voiced concerned the resurrection of the dead. The Qur'an gives very detailed information about this matter, dispelling the unfounded delusions of the misguided. We may cite the following verses by way of example: And he makes comparisons for us, and forgets his own [origin and] creation; He says, "Who can give life to [dry] bones and decomposed ones [at that]?" * Say: "He will give them life Who created them for the first time. For He is well-versed in every kind of creation!"(36:78-79) * If you do marvel [at their want of faith], strange is their saying "When we are [actually] dust, shall we indeed then be in a creation renewed?"(13:5) * And they say: "What! when we lie, hidden and lost, in the earth, shall we indeed be in a creation renewed?"(32:10) * Were We then weary with the first creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new creation?(50:15) * The unbelievers say [in ridicule]: "Shall we point out to you a man that will tell you, when you are all scattered to pieces in disintegration, that you shall [then be raised] in a new creation?(34:7) * They say: "What! When we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up [to be] a new creation?"(17:49)

Bediuzzaman says:

"With regard to repetition being necessary due to the repetition of need, the repetition of certain verses [was in] answer to numerous repeated questions over a period of twenty years..."³⁹

4. Change (Renewal) of the One Addressed: Just as the address retains its newness through the change and renewal of the one addressed, so it is renewed through the asking of new questions. The Qur'an is a book of guidance for all humanity down the centuries, and the obdurate unbelievers who deny its verses are also different every century. The repetitions in the Qur'an are therefore as though constantly renewed in order to address all these groups, who are far from each other in time and place. For this reason, the Qur'an "...as answers to numerous repeated questions ..., instructs numerous different levels of people..."⁴⁰

5. Renewal of the Meanings and Lessons to be Drawn: In repeating any eloquent sentence or story, the Qur'an is also renewing/changing the meaning and attendant lessons: "...through making understood in a single sentence and a single story through its agreeable repetitions, numerous different meanings to numerous different classes of people..."⁴¹

6. Renewal of the Manner of Expression: It might be thought that the minor incidents the Qur'an mentions are related to particular times and persons, however, in depth study shows that this is one of its aspects of miraculousness:

"Similarly, by making known that the most minor and unimportant things in ordinary, commonplace events are within its compassionate view and the sphere of its will and regulation, it demonstrates a sort of miraculousness in attaching importance to even the minor events of the Companions of the Prophet in the establishment of Islam and codification of the Shari'a, and both in those minor events being universal principles, and, in the establishment of Islam and the Shari'a, which are general, their producing most important fruits, as though they had been seeds."⁴²

Thus, with the change in conditions, times and people, the manner of expression also changes and is renewed.

The Forms of Repetition

The repetitions in the Qur'an are in various forms, which represent stages and degrees of the address. These are:

1. Proof: The address is directed at the stubborn deniers. Repetition in this form expresses rebuke and condemnation of such people, and has the intention of proving what they deny. The most important matters proved are the Godhead of God Almighty, and His unity, power, and comprehensiveness. Thus,

"... to repeat certain sentences so powerful they produce thousands of results and a number of verses resulting from countless evidences, which ... will prove that all particulars and universals from atoms to the stars are in the hand and under the disposal of a single Being..."⁴³

2. Inculcating the Meaning: Here, it is the believers who are addressed, in order to inculcate the meanings in their minds and increase their belief. The Qur'an frequently repeats its guidance:

"[Inculcating in people's minds and establishing in their hearts] ...an infinite, awesome, all-embracing revolution that, by destroying utterly the vast universe and changing its shape at Doomsday, will remove the world and found the mighty hereafter in its place..."⁴⁴

3. Explanation: As Ibn Rashiq stated, although repetitions in human speech may sometimes be acceptable and at other times wearying, the repetitions in the Qur'an in their various forms represent one of the highest forms of eloquence. For this reason the Qur'an repeats its verses and phrases on such occasions as "and will show the Divine wrath and dominical anger -on account of the result of the universe's creation- at mankind's wrongdoing, which brings to anger the earth and the heavens and the elements..."⁴⁵ We may therefore conclude that

"to repeat such verses is not a fault, but most powerful miraculousness, and most elevated eloquence; an eloquence and lucid style corresponding exactly to the requirements of the subject."⁴⁶

The Purpose of the Repetitions

Now that we have shown that the repetitions in the Qur'an are pure eloquence, and that they are only repetition of the words, and do not cause boredom or weariness, we should ask ourselves concerning the wisdom in this rhetorical device. We can find detailed and satisfying answers to this in various places in the Risale-i Nur. For there are reasons underlying the repetition of sentences and verses, and reasons underlying the repetition of stories, and reasons underlying the thousands of evidences proving the matters of the hereafter and instilling the affirmation of Divine unity, and proving the requital of man's deeds.

Because it is required by the context, or due to the need of the one addressed, or is necessitated by eloquence and rhetoric, the truth of Divine unity is mentioned either explicitly or implicitly more than twenty times on all the pages of the Qur'an. By implication, the purpose of this is to fire the reader with enthusiasm so that he will read it repeatedly. The power and elevated nature of the eloquence ensure that he is untouched by feelings of boredom.⁴⁷

Then, "In most of the long and middle-length suras, which are each small Qur'ans, and in many pages and passages, not only two or three aims are followed, for by its nature the Qur'an comprises many books and teachings, such as being a book of invocation, belief, and reflection, and a book of law, wisdom, and guidance."⁴⁸ The underlying wisdom here is this: "...as a sort of recitation of the mighty book of the universe, it follows many aims in every discussion and sometimes on a single page; while instructing in knowledge of God, the degrees in Divine unity, and the truths of belief..."⁴⁹

And the purpose of the frequently repeated threatening verses:

"The wisdom in the Qur'an repeating severely, angrily, and forcefully, threatening verses like, For wrong-doers there is a grievous penalty (14:22) * But for those who reject [God] - for them will be the Fire of Hell (35:36) is that man's unbelief is such a transgression against the rights of the universe and most creatures that it makes the heavens and earth angry and brings the elements to anger so that they deal blows on those wrongdoers with tempest and storm."⁵⁰

As for the repetition of the stories of the prophets, Bediuzzaman explains its purpose like this:

"And, for example, in repeating many times the stories of Moses (Peace be upon him), which contain many instances of wisdom and benefits, like that of the Staff of Moses, and of the other prophets (Peace be upon them), it demonstrates that the prophethoods of all the other prophets are a proof of the veracity of the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH), and that one who does not deny all of them cannot in truth deny his messengership."⁵¹ There is a second reason for the repetition of the stories of the prophets, which is this:

"For this purpose, and since everyone does not always have the time or capability to read the whole Qur'an, it repeats those stories in the same way as the important pillars of belief, in order to make all the long and middle-length suras each like a small Qur'an. To repeat them then is not excessive, it is required by eloquence, and teaches that the question of Muhammad (PBUH) is the greatest question of mankind and the most important matter of the universe."⁵²

Thus, the most important characteristics of the repetitions that Bediuzzaman deduced were these:

1. Repetition in the Qur'an does not cause boredom and weariness, but enhances the beauty and increases eagerness.
2. The repetitions are only repetitions of words and forms; in reality there is no repetition; repetition is a means of securing constant change and renewal.
3. All the sorts of repetition in the Qur'an are miraculous (inimitable, mu'jiz), and are one of the aspects of its miraculous exposition.

The best way to conclude this paper is with another quote from Bediuzzaman himself: "Thus, since the truths repeated in the Qur'an are of this value, all sound natures will testify that in its repetitions is a powerful and extensive miracle. Unless, that is to say, a person is afflicted with some sickness of the heart and malady of the conscience due to the plague of materialism, and is included under the rule,

Man denied the light of the sun due to disease of the eye,

His mouth denied the taste of water due to sickness."⁵³

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FOOTNOTES

1. Mu'jam Maqayis li'l-Lugha; art. Karra.
2. Islah al-Mantiq; art. Karra.
3. Lisan al-'Arab; art. Karra.
4. Mu'jam Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an; Karra.
5. Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda (n.p., n.d.) 683.
6. Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda, 690.
7. Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda, 686.
8. Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda, 693.

9. Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda, 691 ff.
10. al-Tayyib, 'Abdullah, al-Murshid ila Fahm Ash'ar al-'Arab (n.p., n.d.) 494.
11. al-Murshid ila Fahm Ash'ar al-'Arab, 495.
12. al-Murshid ila Fahm Ash'ar al-'Arab, 495.
13. al-Murshid ila Fahm Ash'ar al-'Arab, 496.
14. al-Mala'ika, Nazik, Qadaya'-Shi'r al-Mu'asir, 241.
15. For further details, see the second and third sections in Part Two of the above work.
16. al-Baqillani, I'jaz al-Qur'an (n.p., n.d.) 106.
17. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, The Words [Eng. trans.] (Istanbul: Sözlere Publications, new edn. 1998) 467.
18. The Words, 467.
19. Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda, 683.
20. Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda, 685.
21. The Words, 466.
22. The Words, 466.
23. The Words, 466.
24. Kitab al-Abtal (n.p., n.d.) 91-2, translated and quoted from, Carlyle, Thomas, On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (London: Chapman and Hall, 1841) 64-5.
25. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, The Rays Collection [Eng. trans.] (Istanbul: Sözlere Publications, 1998) 159.
26. Qur'an, 2:61.
27. Said Nursi says this: "Twelve years ago I heard that a most fearsome and obdurate atheist had instigated a conspiracy against the Qur'an, which was to have it translated. He said: 'The Qur'an should be translated so that everyone can know just what it is.' That is, he hatched a dire plan with the idea of everyone seeing its unnecessary repetitions and its translation being read in its place. However, the irrefutable proofs of the Risale-i Nur proved decisively that "A true translation of the Qur'an is not possible ..." Through spreading everywhere, the Risale-i Nur made the fearsome plan come to nothing." (The Words, 474-5)
28. The Words, 474-5.
29. al-Hayawan, i, 75.
30. al-Hayawan, i, 77.
31. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, Letters 1928-1932 [Eng. trans.] (Istanbul: Sözlere Publications, 2nd edn. 1997) 400-1.

32. Letters, 402. Bediuzzaman also says: "a true translation of the All-Wise Qur'an is not possible. Also, the elevated style of its miraculousness cannot be translated. It would be extremely difficult to express and make understood the pleasure and reality arising from the elevated style in its miraculousness." (Letters, 458)

33. The Words, 467.

34. Qur'an, 12:3.

35. al-Nursi, Badi'u'z-Zaman Sa'id, al-Mathnawi al-'Arabi al-Nuri [Tahqiq: Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi] (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 1994) 78. See also, The Words, 443.

36. al-Mathnawi al-'Arabi al-Nuri, 78 / The Words, 443.

37. al-Mathnawi al-'Arabi al-Nuri, 78 / The Words, 443.

38. The Words, 467.

39. The Words, 467.

40. The Words, 467.

41. The Words, 467.

42. The Words, 467.

43. The Words, 467.

44. The Words, 467.

45. The Words, 467.

45. The Words, 467.

46. The Words, 467.

47. The Words, 468.

48. The Words, 471.

49. The Words, 471.

50. The Words, 472.

51. The Words, 473.

52. The Words, 473.

53. The Words, 474.

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